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## A PLEA FOR THE HIGHER STUDY OF THEOLOGY.

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THE study of theology is the highest, the most comprehensive, the only universal study, for it is the study of God and of all things in their relations to God. Theology is sometimes used in limited senses for the doctrine of God, as distinguished from other doctrines in systematic theology; or for systematic theology itself, as distinguished from other divisions of theology; or, in more popular usage, for those studies which belong especially to the theological seminary and to the Christian ministry, as distinguished from those studies which belong to other callings in life. While there is some propriety in these specific uses of the term, they must not blind us to the comprehensive and proper use, which can be no other than the study of God and of all things in their relations to God.

For this reason theology is now, ever has been, and ever must be the queen of studies; for all other studies have to do with certain particular provinces of the realm of truth, whereas theology has to do with the entire realm of truth, as it considers all things from the point of view of God, their creator and sovereign. When this situation is emphasized, as it is in ancient Scripture, wisdom and theology are practically identified, as by that Hebrew sage when he said in his Praise of Wisdom:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
The knowledge of the All-Holy is understanding.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 5:7.

Theology is queen of knowledge, not by any provisional or temporary appointment, not by the choice of the sciences, or by usurpation over them, but by divine right grounded in the very nature of things. Wisdom herself tells us in the words of that same sage:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,  
 Before his works of old.  
 I was set up from everlasting from the beginning,  
 Or ever the earth was.  
 When there were no depths I was brought forth;  
 When there were no fountains abounding with water.  
 Before the mountains were settled,  
 Before the hills was I brought forth:  
 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields,  
 Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.  
 When he established the heavens, I was there:  
 When he set a circle upon the face of the deep:  
 When he made firm the skies above:  
 When the fountains of the deep became strong:  
 When he gave to the sea its bound,  
 That the waters should not transgress his commandment:  
 When he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
 Then I was by him as a master-workman:  
 And I was daily his delight,  
 Rejoicing always before him;  
 Rejoicing in his habitable earth;  
 And my delight was with the sons of men.  
 Now therefore my sons hearken unto me:  
 For blessed are they that keep my ways.  
 Hear instruction and be wise,  
 And refuse it not.  
 Blessed is the man that heareth me,  
 Watching daily at my gates,  
 Waiting at the posts of my doors.  
 For whoso findeth me findeth life,  
 And shall obtain favour of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

# I.

An eminent American scholar,<sup>3</sup> not many years ago, wrote the story of a conflict between science and religion, in which the sciences one after the other won their freedom from the sway of religion. A

<sup>2</sup> Prov. 8: 22-35.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. DRAPER, *The Conflict between Science and Religion*.

wiser American historian,<sup>4</sup> still more recently, gave a fuller and more accurate narrative of this struggle, which he defines in his title as the warfare of science with theology, but in his introduction more specifically as a struggle between science and dogmatic theology. There can be no doubt that there has been such a warfare, in which science has waged many a battle and won a succession of victories. But this warfare has not been a struggle of science against religion, or theology, or even dogmatic theology, as these authors wrongly say. Religion and theology have taken part in this struggle, but they have not warred *against* science, but rather *on the side of* science against a common foe—*ecclesiastical domination*, the greatest foe of theology, as it is also of all learning. For every martyr to science there have been a hundred martyrs to theology in this conflict against ecclesiastical domination, which has been waged for centuries. The men of science have battled nobly and well—all honor to them—but they never would have won their victories if it had not been for the theologians who fought by their side and suffered cruel wrongs on behalf of truth and righteousness.

The Reformers battled for freedom against the tyranny of Rome; but they found princelets and prelates no less determined for ecclesiastical domination than Rome had been. Dissenting bodies protested and separated from state churches for liberty of conscience, but John Milton saw at once that presbyter was "priest writ large," and other religious bodies found that Independents claimed independence for themselves, but were unwilling to give it to others. The free churches have suffered no less from ecclesiastical domination than the state churches. No form of government, no method of organization or discipline, has been able to escape it. It is rooted and grounded in human nature; it is one of the most aggressive strains of original sin. Jesus told his disciples:

The rulers of the gentiles lord it over them,  
And their great ones exercise authority over them.  
Whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister,  
And whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant.  
The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister,  
And to give his life a ransom for many.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A. D. WHITE, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*.

<sup>5</sup> Mark, 10: 42-45; Matt., 20: 15-28; Luke, 22: 25, 26.

If that is the genuine Christian spirit, then ecclesiastical domination can be no other than an anti-Christian spirit.

It was necessary that the sciences should at all cost free themselves from ecclesiastical domination, but it was just as important for theology also. To identify theology with ecclesiastical domination is a historical wrong of most serious consequences. The sciences need theology just as truly as theology needs the sciences. But they need a theology which is as free as themselves. They cannot afford to give theology over to the tender mercies of ecclesiasticism. They should welcome and give every encouragement to a truly scientific theology.

The peril of ecclesiastical domination no longer exists in this country to any appreciable extent, apart from the organized ministry and the theological seminary. There is no longer any need of banishing religious education from the public schools, or of ignoring and limiting theological education in the colleges and universities; for there is a true religion and a true theology which underlies as a rock-bed, a solid foundation, all the variations of religion.

It is the work of *theological encyclopædia* to give a survey of the whole field of theology; to show the relation of theology to all other departments of learning; to analyze and subdivide theology itself into the various disciplines and departments; to give a history of each and all; to show their proper methods of study; and to present the sources of the disciplines, and their chief literary products.

It has been one of the most unfortunate results of the divorce of theology from the university that theology has not had its just share in the great advance of education in the past half-century. The study of theology has undoubtedly been improved in methods, and has been enlarged by the introduction of a great number of elective studies; but the number of years required for theological study is no greater than it was seventy or eighty years ago. The requirements for entrance to the Christian ministry have not been advanced to any appreciable extent. In many respects they have been lessened.

When one considers the enormous development that has taken place in the medical schools of the country, the advance in the study of law, the unfolding of graduate departments of the universities, and the increased length of preparation for men entering the various other vocations of life, the lack of advanced requirements for the Christian ministry is evidently a serious matter.

The Christian minister is no longer, what he used to be and what he ought to be, the best-educated man in the community. As things are now, he is ministering to men and women, as well educated as, if not better educated than, himself. What other result could be looked for under these circumstances than a relative decline in the public position of the clergyman and in the public estimation of the church? It is necessary, if the church is to regain its true position, and the minister is to be the religious teacher of the next generation, that he should have a much higher education than he can get at present in our theological seminaries. This can be given only in graduate schools in theology where the choicest men may be able to give two, three, and four additional years to the study of theology. If the graduate school is necessary for the higher study of medicine, if graduate schools are necessary in numerous other branches of learning, can theology—the highest, the most comprehensive, the most difficult, and the most important of all studies—do its work without the graduate school? Theology will certainly go on sinking in relative importance and carry with it by inevitable gravitation the ministry, the church, and Christianity itself, unless graduate schools of theology can be established, fully equipped and maintained, in which the study of theology can be carried on to the highest degree of excellence and in the most comprehensive thoroughness.

It must be evident to all who discern the signs of the times that the Christian ministry can no longer win adherents by the dogmatic assertion of the doctrines, institutions, and ceremonies of any of the religious denominations. Authority has its proper place and importance in religion. But the authority of any one religious organization, in the midst of a multitude of others, is practically reduced to a minimum. The only authority that will sway intelligent, educated Americans is the authority of the truth, stated by a man who shows himself to be master of it. No man can become master of the truth until he has searched it through and through and considered it in all its relations and bearings; until its importance has taken possession of him and given him conviction and certainty. Then, seeing clearly and thoroughly himself, he will be able to state the truth clearly and thoroughly, with a moral earnestness and a religious vigor that will convince and give certitude to others.

The church certainly needs a ministry to do the simple, practical work of the congregation; the most of the ministry must, from the nature of the case, be fitted for this kind of work. They may be regarded as the infantry of the Lord's army. But, however necessary the infantry may be in war, the Lord is ever on the side of the strongest artillery. Theologians usually win religious wars. An educated ministry is certain to overcome an uneducated ministry. That church will control the future of religion in this country that will put the best-educated ministry into the field. They will batter to pieces and render untenable every theological position of their adversaries. They will resist every attack with a fire that will annihilate a multitude of enemies. Numbers amount to little in such a warfare. They are but ants trodden under foot by man. In such a combat

How should one chase a thousand,  
And two put ten thousand to flight.<sup>6</sup>

## II.

An eminent preacher from the Highlands of Scotland once said: that the whole of theology was given to our first parents in the garden of Eden, and that there has been no development in theology since that time, but only apostasy. Doubtless there are some who still entertain this opinion; but that was not the teaching of the prophets of Holy Scripture. Lessing said that the history of mankind is the divine training of the race. His countryman Schiller said that the history of the world is the judgment of the world. These are two sides of the same truth, which was not original to these great German poets, but was taught millenniums before by the Hebrew prophets. In fact, the history of mankind is a history of God's training of mankind; the history of the world is a series of divine judgments of the world. But what is that but to say that the history of the world is essentially a history of theology?

Thus theology is in its very nature a study for all mankind. God never limited his discipline to a single race. He never made any one religious body the unique object of his favor. Any election of a people or an individual that God ever made was an election to a service of others. As the ancient covenant of Israel has it:

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 32:30.

Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, from all peoples: for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.<sup>7</sup>

Not Israel alone were the people of God, for, as Amos said:

Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?<sup>8</sup>

And the Psalmist sees an ideal Jerusalem in which all nations are registered among its citizens. Jesus Christ established a religion which was not to be national, provincial, or sectarian, but truly universal for mankind, everywhere and in all ages.

Clement of Alexandria saw clearly and taught explicitly this Christian universalism when he said:

Perchance the philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind, as the law the Hebrew, to Christ.<sup>9</sup>

A deeper study of the origin and early history of Christianity has made this more evident. There can be no doubt that the Greek language, Greek literature, and Greek philosophy furnished Christianity with the best possible form in which to give expression to the great essential doctrines of Christianity. So Roman administration and law gave the very best possible forms in which to incorporate the Christian religion.

There are some who think that the whole fabric of Christianity is imperiled by these historical facts. They have been accustomed to think that the whole of Christianity had a unique divine source. When such a one learns that the greater part of the structure is human in origin, and can be explained by Greek philosophy and Roman law, without thinking at all of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Christianity seems shaken to its foundations.

But, in fact, there is no real cause for alarm, but rather for thankfulness; for we are now able to make distinctions which are indispensable for the progress of theology and of Christianity. It is certainly true that the great fundamental doctrines of the person of Christ and of the holy Trinity were stereotyped in the forms of Greek philosophy. It is as certainly true that Christian institutions were stereotyped in Roman forms. No one can fully understand them unless he

<sup>7</sup> Exod. 19: 5, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Amos 9: 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Stromata*, I, 5.



studies them in these forms. It is necessary, if they are to be translated and explained to the modern mind, that we should be able to discriminate the forms from the substance; we must ascertain all that is really Greek, all that is really Roman, all that is really Hebrew, and all that really came as a new formative and divine teaching from Jesus Christ himself.

Church history has become to the modern theologian of tremendous importance. It is a very different study from what it used to be. Church history must take a very prominent place in the graduate department. It must search out and by historical criticism determine all these problems. Christian institutions, canon law, the government and discipline of the church, must be searched through and through by the most thorough, patient, and exhaustive investigation.

But after this has been fully accomplished, when the analysis has reached its final results, what shall we say? Is that only Christian which can be traced to Jesus Christ himself? Is there no other Christianity save the essence of Christianity? God forbid! Jesus promised his disciples the divine Spirit to guide them unto all truth. He gave them a few simple, original, formative, divine principles, and commanded them to teach all nations and make the whole creation Christian.

Such a universal religion must, from the very nature of the case, use all that is appropriate in other religions. The Greek language the Greek literature, and the Greek philosophy were just as truly preparing the way of Christianity as the Hebrew. Christianity used the forms of the one just as truly as the forms of the other, molding them, transforming them for its own divine purpose. So it used the administrative genius of Rome in the same divine way to give the best organization to the Christian religion. And these Greek and Roman forms, thus used, thus organized, thus transformed, to incorporate and to fix for all time Christian doctrine and Christian institution, are just as truly Christian as the essence of Christianity, and its very substance is embodied in them. The only distinctions that can be made are those of relative importance.

So when the Germanic and Slavonic races came upon the stage of history, and were transformed by Christianity, they did not cease to be Germans and Slavs; they did not become Roman and Greek; they

stamped indelible marks of their own races upon Greek and Roman Christianity, even at the cost of endless divisions and confusions. These divisions and confusions were an inevitable result of the expansion of Christianity. They have certainly enriched Christianity, but at the expense of its unity. Many of them are the results of misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Many of them are due to exaggeration of differences and depreciation of agreements. Many of them represent situations which no longer exist, due to misinterpretations of Holy Scripture, ignorance of Christian history, or use of technical terms in different senses, and the exaggerations inseparable from theological warfare.

It is the work of *Christian symbolics* to determine the real differences and to state them accurately. It is the work of her sister, *irenics*, to look them in the face, search them thoroughly, and so far as practicable reconcile the differences in higher unities.

Christianity now faces the countless millions of eastern Asia and central Africa. We have learned something from the past. We ought not to think of making these nations sectarian Christians or American Christians. We should be content to have them become *real* Christians, leaving them to organize their Christianity in accordance with the genius of their own races.

It is just here that one begins to realize the importance of the study of the religions of the world, a study of their history, a comparison of them, one with another and with Christianity; a discriminating study of them, not rejecting them *en masse*, but conserving and adapting everything that is good in them for the service of Jesus Christ our Lord. The study of the religions of the world is an indispensable part of the work of the graduate school of theology. The more these religions are studied, the more evident it becomes that Jesus Christ did not come into the world to make men Jews, or Greeks, or Romans, or even Britons or Americans, but, as the great apostle tells us: In the new man of Christianity

there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all and in all.<sup>10</sup>

From this point of view any narrowing of the lines of Christianity, whether by sectarian, provincial, national, or racial distinctions, is a distortion of its essential genius.

<sup>10</sup> Col. 3: 11.

A few months ago Germany was startled by what is known as the *Babel-Bibel* controversy. Dr. Delitzsch, of the University of Berlin, stated some facts known to most biblical scholars, indicating that a large part of the religion of Israel was common to Israel and the Babylonians, and in fact derived by Israel from Babylon—raising the question whether there was anything left in the Old Testament that could be regarded as divine in origin. Dr. Delitzsch was correct in the main, so far as he stated facts; but as soon as he began to use archæology as a basis on which to speculate for a revision of theology, he went into waters beyond his depth.

A considerable number of scholars have taken part in public controversy on this subject, and so it has become necessary to explain to the Christian public that the greater portion of the religious institutions of the Bible are not, as has usually been supposed, divine in their origin, but were primarily human institutions, which Israel derived from other nations older and more cultivated than herself. To many people brought up in old-fashioned views of things the whole fabric of the Old Testament seems to be in dissolution. They have vainly struggled against textual criticism and higher criticism and historical criticism, and now archæology—the study of the monuments of Babylonia and Assyria—upon which they had been taught to stay their hopes, breaks in their hands, and pierces them to the very soul. Is, then, the whole Old Testament a vain delusion? Is there nothing more substantial in the Old Testament religion than in other ancient religions?

The situation is, indeed, a cruel one for the anti-critics, but few Old Testament scholars are disturbed by it. They have known all about these things from their first discovery. They have not shut their eyes to any of these facts. They have long ago accepted them and adapted their theology to them.

The religion of the Old Testament, as the religion of the New Testament, was a religion not for Israel alone, but it contained in itself from the start universal principles. As the Christian religion did not hesitate to clothe itself in Greek and Roman forms, so the Old Testament religion clothed itself in the forms provided for it by the great races of antiquity.

As I showed many years ago, Hebrew poetry shows traces of the

influence of Egyptian and of Babylonian poetry alike.<sup>11</sup> The poetry of both these great nations of antiquity underlies Hebrew poetry—gave it its forms, its parallelisms, its measures, its strophical organization, and in part even its terminology and phrases. But take Egyptian and Babylonian poetry at their best, and no one would for a moment venture to compare them in religious genius, doctrinal breadth, or ethical power with Hebrew poetry. Only inspired poets could take the forms produced by the greatest nations of antiquity and shape them so as to become the media of a divine religion, not for Israel alone, but for all nations. To what literature can you go where you will find such religious poetry as the Psalter, which expresses now, as it always has and always will, the worship of Jew and Christian alike in all lands and among all nations?

When we study the religious institutions of Israel and trace them in their historical evolution, it is easy to see that the influences which have come upon them from the great nations of antiquity—Babylonia, Egypt, the Hittites, Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Persia, and Greece—produced potent effects upon the formal development of the Old Testament religion. Each of these great nations of antiquity made its contribution to Hebrew institutions and to Hebrew thought. Israel was tossed to and fro between them as a shuttlecock, battered and bruised, shaped and reshaped through the centuries. Ever ready to perish, but imperishable; overwhelmed by the religions of the conquering nations, yet unconquerable. All other religions perished, each in its turn; but Israel's religion remained, its unique substance unfolding and adapting itself to every new situation with the ever-recurring vigor of perpetual youth; taking from each religion in turn anything that it could appropriate and use, it went on growing stronger and stronger, richer and richer, more and more comprehensive, until it remained the only really potent and living religion in the ancient world; and out of it was born, as out of it alone could be born, the Son of man, the divine Savior of the world.

It must be evident in the present situation of biblical study in both the Old Testament and New Testament departments, that it is necessary that some men at least should pursue all these questions to the very end. These must be men who are determined to face all

<sup>11</sup> *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture*, pp. 376 ff.

the questions of biblical criticism, biblical theology, and biblical archæology, frankly and fully. These questions must be studied in part by undergraduates. But much will remain which can be accomplished only in graduate courses.

It is the greatness and grandeur of the Jewish religion, as of the Christian religion, that, as the universal religion, it does not despise anything that is human, but in all ages its divine nucleus unfolds in the use of everything that is true and right and good in the other religions of mankind.

The incarnation of the Son of God is the culmination and climax of that divine training of mankind which in every age and every nation clothed itself with all those human forms which were appropriate for its sublime purpose, which could be no other than the gradual, slow, but never-ceasing lifting up of mankind to the Creator, Father, and Savior of the world.

### III.

It is evident, from what has been said, that the history of the world is essentially the history of theology, or the history of the knowledge of God.

The knowledge of God does not depend wholly upon the willingness, the ability, and the purpose of God to make himself known. We may be certain that it is the eternal purpose of God that mankind should know him. "This is life eternal," said Jesus Christ, "that they should know thee, the only true God and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."<sup>12</sup> The ancient prophet predicts that

the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.<sup>13</sup>

And Paul tells us:

And we know that, to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.<sup>14</sup>

We may be sure, therefore, that any defect in the knowledge of God that ever has been among men has been due altogether to a

<sup>12</sup> John 17:3.

<sup>13</sup> Isa. 11:8; Heb. 2:14.

<sup>14</sup> Rom. 8:28, 29.

lack of intellectual or moral capacity in man. The human is capable of the divine, but only in part, whether we think of the individual or of nations or races—learning little by little, year by year, generation after generation, age adding to age.

The realm of knowledge has been so constituted by God that even the knowledge of himself depends in great measure upon the knowledge of man and of the world. In primitive times, even to the Hebrews, God was a God of the Holy Land, attached to local sanctuaries, exile from which involved absence from their God. When the national gods sank to the rank of angels or demons, and Israel's God became the God of gods, the supreme Deity enthroned in the highest heavens, he was still conceived as essentially reigning over the limited territory bounded by the Mediterranean, the Libyan desert, and the mountains of central Asia. They could do no other than conceive of him as a faultless oriental monarch. Even the early Christians were compelled by their mental and physical limitations to think of God to a great extent as a Roman Cæsar, exalted above all human defects and limitations. It was inevitable that Augustine should conceive of his God as essentially sovereign, and of salvation as a free gift of sovereign grace.

The God of the Middle Ages was a superior feudal chief, and every sin, even the least, was against the divine majesty, and so, from that point of view, deserving everlasting punishment in hell fire. The well-nigh universal Christian opinion in the fourteenth Christian century was that the earth was a flat surface, and Jerusalem its center; that the sun and moon and stars were luminaries in the heavens, to give light on the earth; that the entire universe had been created out of nothing a little more than five thousand years before. What could be expected of a theology constructed with such a conception of the universe? They knew nothing of America, or the islands of the East and West Indies; nothing of the millions of eastern Asia, or Africa south of Ethiopia and the great desert. They knew but little of geology or astronomy, or of any of the modern sciences. Their theology was so interwoven and inextricably entwined with errors as to man and nature that to separate them was like plucking tares from a field of growing grain. The greater part of the traditional theology was formed in such an environment

as this. The discovery of America and the rediscovery of ancient classic literature inevitably enlarged the scope of theology and had much to do with the Protestant Reformation; but when one studies the Reformation in its environment, he cannot fail to recognize that in many departments of learning a modern schoolboy is wiser than the greatest of the Reformers.

If we could suppose that their theology was a thing apart—a knowledge having its own independent development, entirely free from influences from other departments of knowledge—we might continue to adhere to it as faithful disciples of masters wiser than ourselves. But it is impossible to take that position. It is certain that the theology of the Reformation assumed the forms of thought provided by the intellectual grooves of the sixteenth century; the systems of theology of the Reformers were determined by the molds of their times; and as these were defective, inadequate, and to a considerable extent erroneous, their systems of theology cannot be regarded as the norms of the modern knowledge of God. The great principles of the Reformation were born of God, and the essential substance of the theology of the Reformation was a normal development of Christianity, but the systems in which these were framed have lost their validity, and many of their dogmatic statements are not in accord with truth and fact.

It was possible to believe, with the Westminster divines, in the baptismal regeneration of elect infants, when the baptism of children was universal in the Christian world. But that limitation of the salvation of infants has become incredible to modern Christians. It was possible, when all that was known of the heathen world were the adherents of the false prophet, a few negroes of the accursed race of Ham, and a fringe of American Indians, who were commonly supposed to be remnants of the lost tribes of Israel—it was possible under such circumstances to affirm with the Articles of Religion:

They also are to be held accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he profeseth, so he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature.<sup>15</sup>

But now that the world is known, and it is evident that the

<sup>15</sup> Art. 18.

heathen world greatly outnumbers the nominally Christian world, it is incredible that these countless millions were doomed from birth to everlasting perdition. Modern theologians, whether Catholic or Protestant, have been obliged to find a way of salvation for the heathen world as well as the Christian world, whether we think of a "baptism of desire" or of a following of the light of the Logos "which lighteth every man," or of any other possible scheme. An enlarged knowledge of the world makes many statements of the old theology impossible.

An enlarged view of the universe makes still greater changes inevitable. The heavenly luminaries of the ancients have become to the moderns a multitude of worlds as large as, and many of them vastly larger than, our own. Are any of these countless millions of worlds inhabited? We do not know as yet. It is probable that many of them are. If so, theology must adapt itself to the inhabitants of these other worlds. The older theology excluded from redemption all but the descendants of Adam. It is difficult to find sufficient reasons for such a limitation. It has no biblical support.

Paul conceives of Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God, in whom all things were created, "things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;" he stated that "it was the good pleasure of the Father through him to reconcile all things to himself, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens."<sup>16</sup>

On this basis theology may reconstruct itself so as to regard Jesus Christ as the Creator and Redeemer of the universe, no matter how many worlds there may be, even if there be as many inhabitable worlds as there are inhabitants of this world of ours. Jesus Christ the image of the invisible God is the Mediator and Savior of them all.

Some years ago the self-constituted guardians of theology were terribly frightened when geology showed that this earth of ours was myriads of years older than the biblical chronology allowed; when astronomy raised the years of the universe to enormous dimensions; when the law of development made it impossible to accept any longer the order of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis, or the dogma of the creation of all things out of nothing, in six suc-

<sup>16</sup> Col. 1: 15-20.



cessive days. Real biblical scholars, whose minds were open to instruction, were never greatly troubled by these discoveries of modern science. They studied their Bibles, and found that their Bibles were not responsible for the errors of ecclesiastics; that their Bibles did not claim to give an inerrant history of the creation of the world; that the religious value of their Bibles became greater when they were stripped of responsibility for scientific impossibilities. They saw how much more sublime the God of modern science is than the God of the ancients: a God who did not spend an infinitude of years in idleness to begin at last a six days' work of creation, as an episode in endless time, making out of nothing, as by divine magic, an island of existence in a boundless ocean of nonexistence. They knew that there were other and later chapters of the Bible than the first chapter of Genesis, and that some of these teach that God rejoices in creating;<sup>17</sup> that He laid the corner-stone of the earth in festival when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.<sup>18</sup>

God's creative activities reach back into the infinite past. His creations were so wise and grand that they do not need constant attention to correct defects in their construction. They were organized in accordance with wise and all-comprehensive laws, providing for eventualities and emergencies, with a holy and beneficent purpose to carry on the whole and all its parts toward an ultimate ideal, training the entire creation for a final end of glory.

Nothing can be more absurd than for theologians to be afraid of truth and facts, or to shrink from the synthesis of religion, doctrines, and morals, as well as all other things in immutable and eternal laws. Theology is not dependent for its existence upon the amount of the miracle or of the supernatural that may be left after science and criticism have done their work. If it should ever transpire that all miracles could be explained from the use of appropriate means, and all that is called supernatural could be summed up under the category of law, the real facts, the real doctrines of our religion would not change; but only the methods of their explanation. Which is the more glorious—a God who is constantly interfering with his own laws, or he who has so perfected his laws that they brook no

<sup>17</sup> Prov. 8: 30-33.

<sup>18</sup> Job 28: 6, 7.

interference? Which is the nobler life—to submit to the laws of nature as the beneficent laws of our God, or to seek to avoid them and beg for ourselves special exemption from them? The laws of nature are just as truly laws of God as the laws of Moses. The records of the rocks are just as true as the records of Holy Scripture. The prophecies of astronomy are as sure as the predictions of the prophets. There is no schism in the realm of truth; it is all alike, in various degrees and proportions, the teaching of God.

The systematic theology of the future will not be constructed out of arbitrary interpretation of isolated texts of Holy Scripture; it will not be a denominational theology fused in the heat of sectarian polemics; it will not be a sum of the gradual deposits of traditionalism; but it will be constructed by a thorough use of the inductive and genetic methods, searching all the sources, Bible and nature, history and Christian experience, and out of them all organizing a truly living and comprehensive doctrine of God, a divine teaching for the modern age.

We have come into an age of the world in which theology is passing through its greatest transformations. Nothing that is essential to Christianity, nothing that is substantial, nothing that is really valuable, has suffered, or can suffer, the slightest impairment. Christian theology has gone on developing through the centuries under the guidance of the divine Spirit, and this development has been normal and valid. But at certain intervals there must be a thorough renovation, for there is constantly accumulating about the eternal, imperishable doctrine of God, false, imperfect, and distorted conceptions due to the defects of its environment and the intellectual and moral incapacity of man. There is no other way of keeping Christianity pure than to put it in the fire. Only in the fire will the pure gold of theology shine forth, and the wood and stubble of human follies crumble to ashes. There are, however, two kinds of fire. There is the fire of polemics, of dogmatic assertion, of ecclesiastical persecution. But there is also the fire of irenics, of charity and love. Both of these fires have rendered service for the progress of theology. The one is a consuming fire. It is usually kindled in bigotry and designed to prevent any development of the truth. But in reality it is destructive only of error; it refines and makes more glorious the truth. The other

is a fire which quickens with the power of life and enflames with the enthusiasm of progress.

The age of irenics has come—an age whose supreme conception of God is love, whose highest estimation of Christ is love, whose ideal of Christian perfection is love. The time has come when love should become the great material principle of theology—reconstructing theology itself, reconciling differences between theology and other departments of learning, resolving the difficulties of Christianity, and working toward an ultimate reunion of Christendom.

The great fields of study that invite us here are Christian ethics, Christian sociology, Christian ecclesiology, and Christian irenics. Upon these studies of the graduate school of theology to a great extent depends the future of Christianity in our land and throughout the world.

We fully recognize that the church needs great preachers and great workers as truly as it needs great theologians. But such men are few. They are born with the necessary gifts and endowments. They cannot be made. But such may be persuaded to postpone marriage; to decline calls to comfortable fields of service; to refuse the temptation to a premature exercise of their natural gifts and graces; and, after the example of Jesus and his apostles, and many of the greatest heroes of Christianity, they may determine to hold themselves in reserve until they have cultivated themselves to the utmost possible degree for the greatest of all ministries.

It is a common complaint that the ministry is not what it used to be; that it does not summon to its work as high a class of men as in former times; that the strongest and the most ambitious of the young men prefer other pursuits. This is in part true and in part false. The reason for the real facts of the case are serious defects in theological education. Theology does not, as it is commonly taught, appeal to the best intellects. It does not give the scholar the same freedom of investigation and liberty of conscience that he is sure of in other studies. It does not promise him a sufficiently secure field of usefulness. It does not often invite him to heroic endeavors.

The graduate school of theology should strive to overcome these evils. It should offer to the student the highest, the most compre-

hensive, the most thorough of all studies. It should guarantee him entire freedom of investigation and perfect liberty of conscience.

Then the study of theology will become again a study worth vastly more than any sacrifice or hardship it may cost. It is a study upon which more than any other the future of humanity depends. It is a study which brings into fellowship with prophets and apostles, with all the saints, with Jesus Christ, and with God the Heavenly Father. It is a study which calls forth all that is best within a man—his moral and religious as well as his intellectual powers. It is a study which in all its parts may be animate with love to God and love to mankind. It is a study which men may share with angels and the spirits of the blessed. It is a study which knows no end. Other studies will pass away with the decay of the body and the departure of the world; but the study of theology, begun in this world, will go on forever, richer, fuller, and more glorious, in any and every world, in any and every dispensation, in which God may place us through all the ages of eternity.